

DRAFT

Mr. Pat Fitzmorris
Ducks Unlimited
4626 Cowell Blvd
Davis, CA 95616

Dear Mr. Fitzmorris:

I am writing in support of The Central San Joaquin Floodplain Restoration project.

The San Joaquin River Management Program provides a forum to identify problems and solutions to issues related to wildlife, flood protection, water quality, water supply, fisheries, and recreation. The SJRMP Action Team and Advisory Council have reviewed and discussed this project and support the effort to restore floodplains, improve water quality, and increase habitat for riparian forest and wetland species in the San Joaquin River System.

The Advisory Council is in support of the restoration project proposed by Ducks Unlimited and understands that all landowners are committed to restoring the floodplains and riparian/wetland habitats on their lands. This project will also help in determining future management and adaptive management tools with the implementation of this project.

The 1995 San Joaquin River Management Plan recommends projects related to flood protection and restoration of riparian corridors (see p. 70). The implementation of this project will serve as an opportunity to restore floodplains and riparian/wetland habitat on the lower San Joaquin River.

If you have any questions in this regard, please call Paula Landis at (559) 230-3310.

Sincerely,

Timothy Ramirez, Chair
San Joaquin River Management Program
Advisory Council

**SUPPORTING
DOCUMENTATION
IS ON THE
FOLLOWING PAGES**

Central San Joaquin Floodplain Restoration

Executive Summary

Ducks Unlimited

The lower San Joaquin River has been the subject of agricultural encroachment in the floodway, loss of riparian habitat, non-point source water pollution, eroded sediment, riprap, and loss of off-channel and seasonal wetlands. These agricultural encroachments and water manipulations have resulted in fragmented riparian stands, poor valley oak and cottonwood regeneration, and reduced flood water retention. The January 1997 floods caused extensive damage to farmland and infrastructure in this area, and have created even more incentive to restore the floodplain on the lower San Joaquin River. This is a proposal to restore the floodplain and riparian/wetland habitat of 742 acres of lower San Joaquin River land.

The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service has purchased, through the Emergency Watershed Protection Program, floodplain easements on several properties on the lower San Joaquin, Stanislaus and the Tuloumne Rivers. Ducks Unlimited has agreed to help with the restoration of five of these properties, totaling 742 acres on the San Joaquin River. The East and West Stanislaus Resource Conservation Districts have pledged their support and technical assistance for this project. The goals of restoring these properties are:

- Restore functional floodplains
- Retard runoff and reduce soil erosion and sedimentation
- Improve water quality in the San Joaquin River system via wetland filtration
- Increase woody riparian vegetative coverage
- Improve natural regeneration of Fremont cottonwood, valley oak, willow and alder
- Remove invasive exotic vegetation
- Improve Sacramento splittail spawning habitat
- Improve juvenile chinook salmon and steelhead rearing habitat
- Increase habitat for riparian forest/wetland species

To accomplish these goals, set-back levees will be constructed to allow more water retention during flood events. Oxbows, islands, small potholes, ponds and channels will be excavated for areas adjacent to the existing river channel to allow more water holding areas and topographic diversity. Sediment traps will be excavated on each property to provide areas for eroded sediment to settle. The properties have stands of *Arundo* (giant reed) that is an invasive reed native to India that needs to be controlled. The riparian areas will be planted with rootstock and cuttings of native trees to facilitate riparian growth.

Eighty acres of uplands will be planted for ground-nesting birds and 200 acres will be planted with native trees and shrubs. At least fourteen water control structures will be installed or replaced. Monitoring the success of the project will include water samples

being taken before the project start and after completion. Water samples will be tested for dissolved sediment, DDT isomers and selenium. Another monitoring component will be measuring the success of the riparian plantings using standardized vegetative percent cover techniques.